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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 305th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 20 November 2007, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Badji ..... (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

2. **The Chairman** informed the Committee that during the previous few weeks there had been an increase in diplomatic activity in preparation for the meeting sponsored by the United States of America on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, tentatively scheduled for 26 November 2007, in Annapolis, Maryland.

Developments in the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem

3. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) said that there still had been no significant change on the ground in the suffering of the Palestinian people and the system of Israeli occupation. Incursions by the Israeli army were continuing, not only in the Gaza Strip but also in many parts of the West Bank, for instance, in the city of Nablus and nearby camps, including Far'a camp, where an incursion that very day had resulted in injuries to 14 Palestinians. There had also been attacks on Jenin, Tulkarm, and Ramallah. Even in the village of Bil'in, which had demonstrated its dedication to non-violence by holding a peaceful demonstration every week against the separation wall, scores of demonstrators, including not only Palestinians but also their friends from Israel and other countries, had been injured while engaged in non-violent resistance to the Israeli armed forces. Israel maintained over 560 checkpoints, and 11,000 Palestinians remained in Israeli prisons. Occasionally a few hundred were released, but every week hundreds more were imprisoned. The isolation of the Gaza Strip was continuing, even tightening, and was suffocating the economy. Indeed, Gaza was on the verge of a catastrophic humanitarian crisis.

4. With regard to the political situation, Palestine was engaged in intense negotiations with the Israeli team in preparation for the Annapolis meeting, in addition to the many meetings between President Abbas of the Palestinian Authority and Prime Minister Olmert of Israel. Unfortunately, the two sides were not yet close to agreeing on a serious and substantive document to be presented in Annapolis, a document that addressed the core issues and could provide a basis for concluding a peace treaty within a reasonable time. Success was not assured. He would appeal to all of Palestine's friends, especially those with good relations with Israel, to exert every effort to push for agreement on such a document. President Abbas had been receiving visitors from the four corners of the globe who sought to help the parties arrive at common language. President Abbas had just received his official invitation, and other invitations were surely going out. He understood that the conference would begin with a dinner on 26 November, followed by official meetings on 27 and 28 November. On 22 November there would be a very important meeting with representatives of the Arab countries, which President Abbas himself would attend, to decide on a collective strategy for the conference and for an Arab peace initiative.

5. Observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November 2007 came at a very significant time. Not only would it follow on the heels of the Annapolis meeting, but it would also mark 40 years of occupation of Palestine by Israel and the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 242 (1967). In addition to debate in the General Assembly, observances would include the opening of an exhibit of Palestinian needlework in the Visitors' Lobby and a concert by Palestinian-American musicians. He hoped that all delegations would join in celebrating the continued creativity of the Palestinian people in the face of great hardship.

6. He welcomed the recent adoption by the Third Committee of a resolution on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination by 172 votes to 5 with 5 abstentions. In addition, he noted a number of errors in the report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/2007/643), which had been considered at the 5781st meeting of the Security Council. For example, the report had implied that suicide attacks were increasing in Israel, whereas many observers had reported that they had been decreasing. In his statement at that meeting, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator had corrected the misinformation in the report.

Fortieth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 242 (1967): consideration and adoption of a Committee statement

7. **The Chairman** drew attention to a draft Committee statement prepared by the Bureau to be

issued as a press release on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 242 (1967). He noted that, since the Committee's establishment in 1975, its position had been that the landmark resolution provided an important political and legal foundation for efforts aimed at ending the occupation and resolving the conflict and was the reference point for all attempts to bring about a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the wider Arab-Israeli conflict. It had been 40 years since the Council had first called upon Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories, but Israel had yet to comply. The Bureau had felt that it would be timely for the Committee to remind the occupying Power that the occupation must come to an end without delay or preconditions and that the Palestinian people should be allowed to exercise their inalienable rights. The Committee should also appeal to the international community to redouble efforts aimed at bringing to the occupation to an end and achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

8. **Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the anniversary was a sad occasion, since it reminded the international community that it had been 40 years since the Israeli occupation had begun. His delegation welcomed the initiative to draft a Committee statement and would like to propose a slight change. Security Council resolution 242 (1967) pertained not just to the Palestinian cause, which was of course at the heart of the conflict, but to the entire Arab-Israeli conflict and to all occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan. His delegation therefore proposed broadening the reference in the third paragraph by replacing "Israeli-Palestinian conflict" in the first sentence with "Arab-Israeli conflict" and "the Occupied Palestinian Territory" in the second sentence with "all occupied Arab territories". Naturally, the bulk of the text rightly focused on the plight of the Palestinian people, and his delegation supported it fully.

9. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) said that his delegation had no objection to the inclusion of those ideas, but perhaps the statement should encompass both the general and the specific. The first sentence of the third paragraph could read: "The Committee reiterates that the occupation is the root cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict, at the heart of which was the Palestinian question". The following sentence could refer to "all occupied Arab territories", but also mention "the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem". After all, the Committee dealt mainly with the question of Palestine.

10. **The Chairman** said that he saw no contradiction between the basic ideas of the Observer for Palestine and the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic. There was simply a need to find an appropriate form of words to encompass the concerns expressed. Perhaps that could be accomplished by the Chairman in consultation with the two delegations and any other interested delegations, with the help of the Secretariat.

11. **Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that he had no problem with that procedure. Perhaps instead of a general reference to occupied Arab territories, a specific reference could be included to the Syrian Golan. That was the essence of his delegation's concern. As it happened, of the territories referred to in resolution 242 (1967) only Palestine and the Syrian Golan remained occupied.

12. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) said that his delegation had no objection to including a reference to the Syrian Golan and was content to leave the matter of the appropriate wording to the Chairman's consultations. However, the wording chosen needed to be factual and precise. If the sentence went on to say, as in the current draft, "as stipulated in resolution 242", what preceded it must be congruent with what was stated in the resolution.

13. The important point in the statement was the reinforcement of the principles set forth in the resolution, namely the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war, the principle of exchanging land for peace and the principle of a just solution to the refugee question. It was entirely appropriate for the Committee to make the statement, and he urged all delegations to support it.

14. **Mr. Malmierca Díaz** (Cuba) said he had complete confidence that the Chairman, in consultation with the delegations most directly affected, could arrive at an acceptable compromise, since all members were united in their support for the Palestinian people.

15. **Mr. Sow** (Guinea) said that his delegation would favour a broad reference to the Arab-Israeli conflict in the third paragraph, since it was evident that the occupation caused problems not just for Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic but for all the neighbouring Arab countries. Then in the fourth sentence of the first

paragraph the Syrian Golan could be added to the enumeration of the territories that remained under Israeli military occupation. It was important that the message conveyed by the Committee's statement should be very clear and in keeping with the resolution, and he had every confidence that the Chairman, in consultation with interested delegations, could find the appropriate language.

16. **Mr. Medrek** (Morocco) said that his delegation also had full confidence that a compromise wording could be found that would address the legitimate concerns expressed by the Syrian delegation while remaining faithful to the Committee's mandate and consistent with resolution 242 (1967).

17. **Mr. Grieger** (Secretary of the Committee) said that, as a result of quick consultations, the following language was proposed for the first two sentences in the third paragraph: "The Committee reiterates that the occupation is the root cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the core of which is the question of Palestine. Israel must withdraw from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Syrian Golan in keeping with resolution 242 (1967), reinforced in resolution 338 (1973) and numerous subsequent Security Council resolutions".

18. *The Committee statement, as amended, was adopted.*

Consideration of draft resolutions on the question of Palestine

19. **The Chairman** drew attention to four draft resolutions entitled, respectively, "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People", "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat", "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat" and "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine", which were to be submitted to the General Assembly under agenda item 18, entitled "Question of Palestine". The draft resolutions had been discussed and approved by the Bureau, which recommended them for approval by the Committee. They were based on the resolutions adopted at the sixty-first session, but had been updated to reflect recent developments on the ground and international efforts towards the resumption of the peace process. A number of substantive, as well as editorial and technical changes, had been made.

20. With respect to the substantive changes, new language had been added to the preamble to the draft resolution on the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People indicating that the Quartet road map had been endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 1515 (2003), and a new paragraph recalling the Arab Peace Initiative had been added. In paragraph 2, the words "including their right to self-determination" had been inserted after the phrase "the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people".

21. In the draft resolution on the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat, paragraph 2 had been revised in order to recognize the Division's contribution to raising international awareness of the question of Palestine and generating international support for the rights of the Palestinian people and a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. In paragraph 3, the monitoring of developments relevant to the question of Palestine had been added to the list of tasks carried out by the Division.

22. In the draft resolution on the special information programme on the question of Palestine, the fifth preambular paragraph had been shortened and a new preambular paragraph recalling the Arab Peace Initiative had been added. In paragraph 3 (b), the word "relevant" had been inserted before the words "recent developments" and the last phrase had been revised to refer to efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. In paragraph 3 (c), the last phrase now read "the public exhibit on the question of Palestine displayed in the General Assembly building".

23. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to approve the draft resolutions on the Committee, the Division for Palestinian Rights and the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information.

24. *It was so decided.*

25. **The Chairman**, turning to the draft resolution entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine", said that the substantive changes to the preamble included the addition of new language welcoming the Arab Peace Initiative and the convening of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meeting in September 2007, and the addition of new paragraphs expressing concern over the unlawful takeover of Palestinian Authority institutions in the Gaza Strip in June 2007, taking note of the initiative of the United

States President with regard to the peace process and welcoming the forthcoming convening of an international meeting aimed at achieving a just and comprehensive solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole.

26. Paragraph 2 of the draft resolution had been revised to refer to the efforts of the League of Arab States in the Middle East peace process, and a reference to the follow-up steps to the Arab Peace Initiative had been added to paragraph 3. Paragraph 5 now referred to steps aimed at halting the deterioration of the situation, promoting stability and restarting the peace process.

27. Paragraph 6 had been revised to read "*Stresses* the need for a speedy end to the reoccupation of Palestinian population centres, including, inter alia, by removal of all Israeli checkpoints erected within the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and the need for respect and preservation of the territorial unity, contiguity and integrity of all of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem".

28. Paragraphs 7 and 8 reproduced language used in the previous year's resolution, with slight modifications. Paragraph 9 contained new language stressing the need for Israel to cease its closure of all crossings into and out of the Gaza Strip and to allow for the unimpeded movement and access of humanitarian personnel and supplies".

29. The words "including East Jerusalem" had been added at the end of paragraph 14 (a), and the word "justly" had been inserted before the phrase "resolving the problem of Palestine refugees" in paragraph 15. Lastly, in paragraph 16, the words "particularly in the Gaza Strip" had been inserted after the words "the Palestinian people".

30. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to approve the draft resolution entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine".

31. *It was so decided.*

Other matters

32. **The Chairman** reminded delegations that the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People would take place on 29 November 2007, and he invited all members or observers of the Committee to be represented at the commemorative meeting to be held on that occasion, if possible at the ambassadorial level. He also urged all Committee members and observers to participate actively in the debate on agenda item 18, "Question of Palestine", in the plenary Assembly, and requested them to encourage non-members to do the same.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.